



**A STUDY ON: HOW ‘SOCIAL MEDIA’ A DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY,
INFLUENCES INDIAN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS’ DECISION TO STUDY
ABROAD IN IRELAND**

(In the Context of Digital World)

By-

TANUSREE MUKHERJEE

Student ID – X21239134

Course – MSc in International Business

Supervisor – Prof. Joe Naughton

School of Business

Submitted to the National College of Ireland, May 2023

ABSTRACT

The main objective of the study is to identify perceived benefits of using social networks as a digital marketing tool and their beneficial effects on students. The impact of social media as a strategy in the context of global education and how institutions are adapting to it are of particular interest to the thesis. The purpose of this study is to close a gap in descriptive data on the use of social media to be a digital marketing tool to entice Indian international students to pick Ireland as their preferred destination for higher education. The study focuses on the reasons why Indian students choose Ireland as their study abroad destination, providing valuable insights for future international businesses to develop effective marketing strategies based on the research findings. It uses a mixed-methods approach, using both qualitative and quantitative research methods. To gather data, online surveys and interviews were conducted with Indian students currently pursuing their degree in Ireland. This is due to Ireland's high-quality education system, affordable tuition fees, and opportunities for personal and professional growth. Additionally, universities and colleges in Ireland provide international students with a range of support services and resources, including language classes, cultural integration programs, and career development services. These services help students adapt to their new environment and make the most of their study experience. Combining social media marketing with effective support services and resources can assist universities and colleges in Ireland in attracting more international students, including Indian students, to study in Ireland. Universities in sending countries are enrolling more international students, and these collaborations are helpful for pedagogy. Due to the country's economic growth since 2013, Ireland, which was not previously a well-known study abroad location, has gained recognition. A platform for international education is one that uses social media. The new method of advertising via social media has an impact on international students. International students have been selected by colleges and schools in Ireland based on essays, writing samples, letters of recommendation, resumes, and interviews.

Keywords: *Social Media, International Education, Overseas, Digital Marketing, Study Abroad, Indian Students, India, Ireland*

Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

**National College of Ireland
Research Students Declaration Form
(Thesis/Author Declaration Form)**

Name: Tanusree Mukherjee

Student Number: X21239134

Degree for which thesis is submitted: MSc in International Business

Title of Thesis: A study on: How ‘social media’ a digital marketing strategy, influences Indian international students’ decision to study abroad in Ireland

Thesis supervisor: Prof. Joe Naughton

Date: 05.05.2023

Material submitted for award

- A. I declare that this work submitted has been composed by myself. ✓
- B. I declare that all verbatim extracts contained in the thesis have been distinguished by quotation marks and the sources of information specifically acknowledged. ✓
- C. I agree to my thesis being deposited in the NCI Library online Open access repository NORMA. ✓
- D. I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been Used in any other submission for an academic award. ✓

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my gratitude to God for his blessings and guidance throughout my master's program and for providing me the strength and intelligence to finish my research thesis. I also want to acknowledge and thank my esteemed supervisor, Professor Joe Naughton, whose invaluable assistance and contribution were critical to the success of this research project.

I am thankful to all the lecturers of Master of Science in International Business and all other faculties at The School of Business for their immense academic support and input during my course of study.

My deepest appreciation goes to my family and friends for their unwavering love, support, prayers, and assistance throughout my academic journey and the successful completion of this research project.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	6
Research Problem.....	6
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	7
Conclusion.....	17
RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	18
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	18
Research Objective.....	18
Research Philosophy	19
Research design and method	20
Data Collection	21
Data Analysis Methods.....	21
Interviews Conducted	28
FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS.....	29
RESEARCH LIMITATIONS	32
DISCUSSION.....	32
CONCLUSION.....	37
FUTURE RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS	40
REFERENCES	41

INTRODUCTION

The world of computers is advancing rapidly with new products being added every day. Social media is an umbrella term for the new generation of internet applications that are generating a lot of buzz and commercial interest. One of the main subjects being discussed is the importance of social media as an educational environment. It promotes mouth to mouth communication and user engagement with a focus on user-generated control rather than supplier control. It also offers integrated, targeted, and measurable communication. The most potential and important platform is social media marketing because it enables businesses to communicate with customers all over the world. Ireland ranks 13th among EU member states in the number of international students, which has significantly increased over the past few decades.

Authorities support online digital marketing because it eliminates demographic and psychological barriers, enabling businesses to reach out to new clients. Social media is another tool used by the global education platform. By utilizing social media marketing, promotional emails, and email marketing, digital marketing entails promoting products, selling them, and offering services. However, Ireland's colleges rely on recruitment agencies, who have been using essays, recommendations, resumes, and interviews to choose international students. By influencing student decision-making and lowering costs, virtual strategies can help shrink the size of the domestic and global markets. The increasing competition in the education sector has forced educational authorities to market themselves to manage with the nationwide global market.

In conclusion, social media is a very crucial and powerful tool for businesses and other Medias to interact with clients worldwide and has great potential as an educational environment. Virtual strategies can help reduce costs and influence the student's overall decision-making process throughout, making it an important consideration for educational institutions

Research Problem

The research has addressed and analysed a gap in descriptive research on the use of social media as a digital marketing strategy to attract Indian international students to choose Ireland as their advanced education terminus. The study aims to provide a reasonable conclusion that can assist future international businesses in developing strategies on the research findings.

A. Justification of the study

With the development of social media platforms, it has become simpler for people to access information and connect with others globally. As a result, digital marketing has grown in importance (West, 2021). Given that the country's advances in technology have made it possible for younger generations to turn to European nations for higher education opportunities, India is one of the top sending markets for international students (Pawar, Dasgupta, & Vispute, 2020). Young people's decision to study abroad in Ireland has been significantly influenced by social media sites like Snapchat, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram (Digital Marketing Institute, 2018). Educational institutions have been forced to market themselves in order to compete in the international market due to government deregulation and increased race in the education sector. The institutions in sending markets are enrolling more and more foreign students, and these collaborations are helpful for pedagogy. Due to the country's recent economic growth, Ireland, which was not previously a popular choice for international studies, has also gained recognition. Therefore, it is essential to investigate the influence of social media on Indian students' decision to choose Ireland as their preferred destination for higher education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Technology-based marketing has a crucial role in the rise of international education. The situation and parameter that results supports Ireland's state as a host nation and India's position as a directing market. Due to their reliance on recruitment agents, Ireland can be seen to be falling behind the competition in this area. International students have been impacted by their new culture through social media. International students are chosen for admission to Irish colleges through interviews, resume reviews, recommendations, and essays. A Virtual strategies can help cut costs, affect students' choices, and further shrink the markets at home as well as abroad. As internet availability grows, the distinction between small towns and cities is blurring. This has allowed marketers to reach consumers in even the remotest parts of India, as evidenced by Gosain and Rawat (2018). However, despite having a population of 1.3 billion and over 450 million daily internet users, social media penetration and traffic in India are lower than expected. According to Thorsdottir (2019), social media penetration in India is foreseen to reach 371 million by 2022, as the huge rural population is not yet inclined to use social media. Currently, only 14% of active social media users are from rural parts, while two-thirds of active users are from urban areas, with Delhi and

Mumbai having the highest user concentration. The majority of social media users in India are young, with over 60% being college-going students. This presents a specific age demographic to focus on, understand the changes and current trends in their consumption and studying behaviour due to Instagram. It is worth noting that according to Bisen (2018), 71% of consumers in India are likely to make a purchase based on something they have seen on social media, which makes the research question even more relevant. The power of social media channels, especially Instagram, is increasing due to the rising investment from marketers in India (Thorsdottir, 2019). Instagram brings traffic from 78 million people from all over the country (Gosain and Rawat, 2018). The study is carried out following the synthesis of earlier papers and the acquisition of current knowledge regarding the Objective; as a result, the following broad area has been narrowed gradually.

A. Indian students studying abroad

The number of Indian students obtaining higher education degrees from foreign nations has been on the rise in the last decade. According to Monitor (2019) statistics, around 780,000 Indian students travelled overseas in 2018 to pursue their master's or similar degrees, and this number is expected to increase with the rising young population of India. The affordability of internet connectivity in India contributed significantly to the growth of digital media marketing platforms, providing viable opportunities for foreign institutions to attract Indian students. Irish universities have become popular among Indian students due to their lower tuition fees compared to the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia, and the availability of a range of universities offering expensive and less expensive education. Groarke and Durst (2019) report that Indian students rank second in the Irish education market, and this is attributed to the significant use of social media by the Indian teenage population.

B. Importance of Social Media in Today's World

Over the past ten years, the Internet has undergone a revolutionary change. According to Cluley, Green, and Owen (2019), the advancement of cell phones and the introduction of 4G technology have increased the accessibility of communication channels, having a big effect on the advertising platform. This was crucial for target marketing because it allowed businesses to access big data, which in turn gave digital marketing more prominence. The ability of institutions to market their programs to students who want to pursue degrees has made this a turning point for the global education industry. According to Vail (2018), these

institutions must now prioritize using digital platforms to advance and expand their businesses. This will enable universities and other educational institutions to attract a sizable student body from all over the world, enabling them to meet their objectives and cut down on expenses related to the traditional market. Social media is a tool that aids in university marketing and offers a forum for dialogue between students and professors.

Even before a student is given an offer letter to attend a higher education, they can speak with the faculty to learn more about the program. Additionally, the faculty, both teaching as well as non-teaching can help the student better understand the physical environment, which can be unusual for foreign students.

C. Higher educational prospective of social media marketing

The main components of contemporary marketing are data. Social media is a huge source of information that advertisers can use to learn more about their target markets. The specific algorithms that social media platforms employ enable them to provide consumer advertising that is targeted (Balteanu, 2019). As a result of the competitive market environment, the platforms managers and its partner organisations have access to a wealth of data.

International students have indeed been drawn to Ireland since the economy began to grow in 2013. Ireland was not regarded as a necessary study abroad location. According to the Irish Times article, 385 million euros are contributed annually by foreign students, and in 2019, an estimated 1700 foreign students were enrolled in Irish universities and colleges. According to O'Reilly and Ryan (2013), Ireland must make gradual transitions to a modern mindset.

Australia's institutions have become the top destination for international students thanks to a well-laid plan introduced by their government, which exemplifies excellent targeted social media marketing execution. According to Hyett et al. (2019), the main objective of study abroad is to maximize bilateral liberalization to provide the sector with excellent gains in productivity, export opportunities, competition in the market, and FDI.

D. Overseas Educational Perspective of Digital Marketing

Higher education choices have been greatly influenced by the virtual world. For example, social media marketing platforms are a great option for advertising. According to Fujita et al. (2017), to promote and popularize themselves, advanced education nations, universities, and colleges must take advantage of the opportunities provided by digital marketing platforms.

According to some, social media promotions help brands grow. According to Eaton and Pasquini (2020), there are numerous ways to achieve these objectives. Advertisers start

battles with the aid of coordinators in networking media stages and prepare in advance using outsiders paid to publicize on locations for informal organization. In order to build a positive brand image, advertisers heavily rely on positive e-WOM (Electronic word of mouth) from current users (Pinar et al. 2020). Intuitive advancements can be used to promote brand experience. This entices the client to investigate more extra information on the brand.

E. Recruitment Marketing Strategies

The fast-paced and volatile market of the schooling industries allowed the marketing managers to locate trustworthy students. According to Naidoo and Wu (2011) in their article, both New Zealand and Australia serve as ideal examples for the application of conventional marketing strategies because both nations recognized the possibilities of the educational sector and collaborated with the governments. The other traditional methods include campus visits, public relations initiatives, brochures, and media advertisements. In the words of Vrontis, Sakka, and Amirkhanpour (2015), when the competition in the market into multiple markets, the quantity of agents and recruitment agencies increased alongside the universities, and the advancement of internet technology then managed to improve the engagement with customers directly through websites. Traditional recruitment methods were more successful in a pre-internet world. The development of internet marketing has increased students awareness of the potential for international admission. Additionally, the admissions process was viewed as being difficult for the average person to complete and was thought to be tedious. Only a small number of the most talented students—all from the home countries—were chosen and given scholarships to study abroad.

F. Push-Pull Factors

Because of the economy and lack of educational resources in their home country, students will opt to study and seek international education. This has a push and pull effect on international education.

According to Gbollie and Gong (2020), the nation will use all of its resources to entice students to attend its institutions. This approach will serve as the host nations' adaptation of the pull factor. According to Mazzarol and Soutar (2012), the host country's economic situation, university reputation, career opportunities, and educational system are just a few of the various factors that influence decisions. According to Azmat et al. (2013), of the aforementioned factors, the economic situation, education, career freedom, and abundance of opportunity worldwide are what attract Indian nationals the most. A developing country's

relationship to the digital world changes, and India, which has a first-rate technological infrastructure, should be influenced. India is a nation with a younger generation that greatly contributes to the sector of higher education. As was already stated, we can infer that a host nation like Ireland should concentrate on enhancing their online marketing and focusing on nations like India through social media to draw in new generation's minds and talents. Both nations will reap benefits in terms of their economies and pool of skilled workers. The economy along with numerous other factors improve as more students move to Ireland. One of the things that is frequently overlooked when discussing a nation like India is the fact that its citizens are drawn to education in addition to having a large number of young people. As from previous era, when only the privileged were educated, the psychological attitude of the participants has changed. Nowadays, it is uncommon to come across a child without a primary education. Universities should become more adapted to technological advances when it involves hiring since social media as well as its systems have a significant impact on potential students.

G. Engagement in social media platforms by universities

The emergence of social media as well as digital platforms has transformed business over the past ten years.

The statistic report as of July 2020 states that the global social media engagement has exceeded the 1 billion social media users, 2 billion Facebook users, 570 million earlier in the document. Facebook is still the most popular digital media platform, followed by Facebook, WeChat/Wixin, Instagram, and Tik Tok. It should be noted that universities should also get involved with Facebook because of the platform's large user base. When a student uses their search engines to look up universities, the websites that recommend universities build links so that the user can learn more about the university. They will be pleased to find that the hyperlink takes people to social media, particularly Facebook, as they already have access to it. The content could range from articles on "all the information you require to know regarding picking the best university for you" to videos of student personal testimonies and student events like homecoming. (Marx, 2020).

The upcoming Chinese social media app TikTok has nearly 1 billion downloads on Google Play. It is advisable to show the presence on this app as well, given that the younger generation—which is the dominant demographic in India, China, and the USA—can be influenced by this strategy. A crucial strategy for attracting more qualified professionals to the intensive courses is to develop a marketing strategy through LinkedIn. Between the ages of 18 and 30, the graduating scale of students seeking admission to universities and colleges consists primarily of Millennials and Gen Z. Most college students fall into one of two categories. Fadhrullah and others, 2020. Ammigan and Laws (2018). Numerous studies have been conducted in the last ten years to better understand the daily activities of third-level graduate learners, especially their use of social networking sites. There must be a process for innovation. The researchers listed several advantages of social media use. According to research by Saw et al. (2013) on the digital media habits of international students, Facebook is the primary and most widely used communication system, followed by YouTube, Twitter, and LinkedIn. An analysis regarding organizational and personal involvement in social networking sites is one of the study's additional findings. 33% of graduates, according to the study, want to keep their autonomy in their cognitive and social careers, Saha and Karpinski, (2016).

H. Characteristics of Digital Platform

As can be seen from the literature review section above, the majority of theoretical studies gave social media a significant amount of weight. Social media, as we all know, has a wide range of features. These characteristics are essential and ultimately contribute to their survival. These features can be broken down into three categories from a business perspective based on their relative importance.

Engagement - It is important to note that when discussing customer engagement, "Online consumer interaction is engaging, and co-creative perspectives of the customers with either the internet or offline which did lead to an exact psychological condition of the customers and identifies the purpose of consumers in purchasing patterns" (Abrar et al.,2019). Today's online engagement can be quantified. Likes, shares, and comments are the main three channels used for this measurement process. They depend on the circumstances. It has been noted that the friendliest communication taking place on online media platforms has led to an

increase in the quality of content. The customer's propensity to criticize any sort of autocratic government imposed upon him is an exhilarating thing to note. This supports the tendency toward cordial communication that was previously mentioned. The creation of social organizations within a media is essential because the participants can be modified to receive quality information from the groups. According to Marbach et al. (2016), over-promotion by groups has been shown to be effective.

Collaboration - The popularity of social media had brought like-minded individuals together. Liang and Pang (2019) look at how these alliances can also advertise particular people and brands.

Collaborations are a successful strategy for getting an edge over rivals. There are many different kinds of collaborations available. Universities or colleges may partner with a well-known company, person, or celebrity. In nations like India, celebrities have a greater impact on people than brands. Therefore, based on one's target geographic area, higher education institutions can choose which kind of collaboration is efficient and ought to be carried out.

Compared to traditional marketing strategies, partnerships but also online collaborations are more cost-effective and have a greater audience penetration. Olcay et al. (2019) discover that communication made possible by the use of messengers and emails can lead to the beginning of collaborations. To facilitate qualified recruitments, host nations form alliances with colleges and universities abroad.

I. Collaboration and Engagement with the Communities Online

Jintao et al. (2019) conducted research that suggests that the quality of content on online media platforms increases as a result of friendly conversations. They noted that customers tend to reject authoritarian approaches, as reported by Marbach et al. (2016), which underscores the effectiveness of collective over-promotion.

The rise of social media has enabled the gathering of people who share similar interests, and Liang and Pang (2019) have examined how these alliances can benefit certain personalities and brands. Collaborations provide an opportunity for universities and colleges to gain an advantage over their competitors, and they can choose from various forms of cooperation based on their target geographic area. Therefore, they can determine which type of partnership is effective and should be implemented.

J. Implementation of Digital Platforms

In the modern digital marketing landscape, social media has become the primary channel for marketing. "Better 10 results can come from a social media campaign that is successful." The 2013 book *Social Company by Design: Truly revolutionary Social Networking Strategies for the Attached Company*. As was previously stated, Facebook needs to be the main focus because it is the most widely used and accessible social media. Users of Facebook can choose from a number of features.

The advertising platform's members are extremely accessible for business purposes, which expands the customer base. Additionally, Facebook's target-driven advertising program aids in data analysis and has an impact on consumer choices. For sharing videos, YouTube is well-known. There are desktop and mobile versions of this. In the case of teenagers in school, YouTube is a great influence. YouTube provides them with search results when they look for their higher education options that enable them to develop a deeper understanding of the academic institutions and campus life.

Students can use microblogging platforms like Twitter to better understand university policies. Instagram's photo-sharing capabilities will allow students to see what universities are really like (Sheth, 2020). The Chinese software TikTok will be able to collect the data thanks to a better algorithm that it has built into the program. Google Analytics will assist the user in understanding and analysing the collected data when it comes to data analysis. There are many social media platforms available online. Each has a sizable user base as well. Therefore, managing activities across all websites is a challenge for universities and other educational institutions. They have therefore formed a team to concentrate on their promotional strategies in such a situation. The universities that are successful at managing social media do so with a full team. Utilizing assistance from previous students is another tactic. "Potential students are seeking authentic content from the individuals who have experienced the university and are the best experts on it. Allowing current students and alumni to participate in the social media is a fantastic way to increase interaction and attain on social networks (Marx, 2020). As a result, alumni opinions are more credible and valuable to students than those who have paid for testimonials.

K. Decision Making by Indian International Students

Before social media's effects on cultural factors, university social parameters, and word-of-mouth marketing, traditional research, according to Bowers and Pugh (1972), concentrated on the decision-making process for selecting universities. The prestige of the educational

institution, the caliber of the education offered, and the courses offered were the main factors in choosing universities. Prior to the advent of social media, word-of-mouth was the main method of disseminating information about colleges, making only the most renowned and esteemed institutions known to students. Additionally, even when students were aware of these entities, their specifics were frequently hazy. As a result of institutions' reluctance to welcome students to their campus, this circumstance presented them with new opportunities. With the advent of social media tools in the 2010s, communication became simpler and more widely available. As a result, people spent more time online and were better able to make decisions. The decision-making process was significantly influenced by messenger chats, likes, comments, private group chats, and other traditional marketing strategies that used technology to influence students to select their preferred colleges and countries of study.

L. Ireland in International Education

International students' mobility is expanding quickly and becoming more diverse. Studies have shown that Ireland is quickly becoming a popular destination for foreign students. Ireland's economy has experienced inclining growth over the last ten years, which has paved the way for the international expansion of its education industry. Ireland needs to focus on the marketing aspect of the company, which will boost its reputation as evidenced by the ratings and scores it has received over the years. In just three years, from 2013 to 2017, Ireland was able to rise to 45%. Ireland can be considered a great success, but it still has a long way to go before it catches up to its rivals and rival nations. The Irish government and organizations want to make a big change by focusing on hiring qualified international students. An example of the development in education marketing is the Higher Education Authority (2021) article, which claims that the government offers grants and scholarships for Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD tier international students. This initiative offers 60 scholarships, all of which are open to students from nations outside the EU/EEA. The students will also receive a full waiver of all school fees and other registration fees at colleges and universities in addition to a stipend of €10,000 for one academic year. Scholarship money like this will bring in more students because costs are one of the biggest challenges self-supporting students must overcome. By providing scholarships such as this, the government and universities are giving international students the chance to reevaluate their financial situation.

M. Severe Challenges of Social Media Platforms

Social media has a number of benefits. Leaving that this apart, there are also some disadvantages.

First, Hubinová (2015) notes that there are potential conflicts of interest and concern as a result of inadequate monitoring. Social media must routinely monitor user interactions and activities both inside and outside of the platform to continue online marketing. According to Yagci (2014), these restrictions and oversight are an essential component of the social types of channels. It can be difficult to get other people to share the aspects that universities post. Universities are powerless to influence this process. In order to do that, colleges and universities need support from their target audience, in this case, students. Universities must instill in their audience a sense of dependability and originality. They must adhere to original and authentic material for that. Some crucial elements in this process include the witness statements and experiences of former students as well as current ones. When people believe something to be true, they naturally begin to promote the University's content without asking the audience first. The researchers noticed specific issues with the structure because colleges and universities have chosen social media as one of their recruiting strategies. For instance, "The students' low content role in contributing, and little effect of social media usage on the judgment of prospective students' engagement of the institutions at a low level, and absence of theoretical models, lack of an appropriate environment for learning about the student's needs, etc.

N. Social Media Marketing (Paid)

A crucial component that will help businesses to place an advert on their platform where businesses and brands pay for online content placement is modern social media-based advertising. The fact that students seeking further education do not have to follow as well as like these pages is a significant benefit of this advertisement. This will make it easier for the intuition to connect with prospective students for higher education who may not be familiar with the College or their courses. The social media platforms provide graphics, advertising campaigns, and demographic targeting, allowing the institute to concentrate on things like location, age, employment, and interests. The organization should use segmentation to better define themselves. The audience's preferences are taken into consideration when creating the intended audience and content campaigns. The new social media era, in contrast to the previous one, is focused on acquisition and conversion. Over the past few years, social

commerce has grown, but in the current environment, that growth has accelerated. To understand better how paid to attract more customers operates, consider the following scenario: If a student searches for coursework in Dublin, the web browser will present a list of academic institutions in Dublin as an outcome. When a student visits a website, an institution with a larger advertising on social media budget will be able to target that student by using the website's cookies to place advertisements on that page. Through in this process, demographic information, such as age, nationality, etc., can be gathered. Despite the fact that it violates the student's privacy, the procedure is moral and completely safe. The educational institution handles may be charged by the websites a small fee for the data collection. The institutions use this information to contact the students with invitations and advertisements via mail, social media, or both.

Conclusion

We encountered numerous statements, arguments, and issues in this section that educational institutions and universities must address when dealing with their marketing strategies. The virtual strategy can help the university cut costs while having a significant impact on both the domestic and global market, and the targeted marketing strategy has the effect of influencing students to make the right choices. Executives who enter the scene with knowledge of business sectors, client needs and tastemakers, risks and possibilities, advertising channels, and brand positioning will be responsible for managing data. In addition to the aforementioned, these points, thus according Biraghi (2017), will help people understand goods and services and introduce new products to the market that can easily meet consumer needs. This demonstrates how empowered and supported the advancement is. The importance of the brand position, the nation, the organization, and the idea of utilizing the potential of the following factors should be stressed-

The following flaws can be seen in the debates and arguments that were held:

- a. The previous research, in general, concentrated on conventional marketing techniques.
- b. The researcher may not have given the widespread popularity social media has attained over the past ten years enough thought.

- c. India, the second-largest sending market in the world with the largest digital population, has not received enough research.
- d. Despite Ireland's widespread support as a destination for higher education, thorough research on the universities should be conducted to improve target marketing strategies and posts on social media.
- e. As inferred from the provided piece of evidence, the emphasis should be on the expanding university education desired location.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This analysis has filled a gap in our knowledge of the use of social media as a media marketing tool to influence Indian international students' decision to study in Ireland. Additionally, this study makes an effort to fill a methodological hole in the body of prior research. In this study, thematic analysis will be used to examine participant attitudes and behaviours regarding the impact of social media.

There are few questions that originates but not limited to –

- How effective and powerful is the interview selection process considering the challenges, students who choose to study in Ireland, confront the most?
- How significantly does the Indian students select the Country, University and the appropriate course using social media networking sites?
- What type of marketing; traditional or social, is most advantageous for the judgement call process and decision?
- Ireland has one of the best-educated labour markets in the world. Considering the way that foreign students evaluate Ireland's educational system?

The nation needs to prioritize the marketing industry. The position of Ireland as seen in the most recent reviews and ratings will be revealed. According to the most recent reports, between 2013 and 2017, the Irish market was able to grow by 45%.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Objective

This thesis will examine and investigate the technological development of the internet and how technology has affected educational marketing practices. According to Hsueh (2018), top management will pursue collaboratively evolving strategy formulation operations through various types of technology, data, and relationships, leading to an unproductive global phenomenon. To get ready for a career in international business, the project covers a wide range of topics and subtopics that can be studied and mastered at different depths. According to the research, social media, social networking sites, the host nation, and the home country all have a significant impact on technology, particularly for the younger generation. The study's findings regarding how technology can influence the marketing of international education.

Social media, possible benefits for an Indian student, and advantages for Ireland that this offers. The following research questions should therefore be posed to conduct further analysis on the topic. As part of this initiative, a rigorous study is being conducted to determine how impactful digital networks is among international students. Also discussed are how Ireland handles students and their selection process.

A set of beliefs and assumptions concerning the accumulation of knowledge is known as Investigate philosophy. Even if a researcher is unaware of it, one may encounter it at any stage of the study process make a few assumptions (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). These assumptions could be related to human knowledge, the reality encountered by the researcher during the process, and how our values may have an impact on the study process.

This demonstrates the extent to which progression is endorsed and encouraged. The following flaws can be identified through the rebuttals and discussions-

- It is possible that the research study does not pay enough attention to the importance that social media has gained in the last era.
- Not enough research has been conducted on India, the world's largest sending market with the most intensive digital era.
- Despite Ireland as overseas education market stop, more research on universities is required to enhance focus marketing tactics and digital media content. As the evidence suggests, the focus ought to be on top destination and the world's largest overseas sending markets.

Research Philosophy

In this paper, the methodology used for the research will be discussed. Additionally, potential limitations of the study will be highlighted, along with recommendations for future research. Digital marketing has played a significant role in the growth of international education, particularly in relation to Indian students choosing Ireland as their study abroad destination (India Blooms [HT Digital], 2019). The objective of this study is to investigate how social media has influenced Indian students' decision-making process when selecting Ireland as their preferred destination for higher education. The research methodology section will provide details on the research aims, methods used, theoretical framework, sampling process, and ethical considerations. The study recognizes that social media and virtual platforms are not the only factors that influence students, but also the various attractive features and competitive analysis of social media sites that can impact students' choice to pursue higher education in Ireland (Clark, Fine, and Scheuer, 2017). However, it is important to note that no single student's influence is more significant than another's. According to the research summary, a device's ability to communicate can have a significant impact on students' reasons for making their choice, and this business model can affect the University's sales when it is used effectively with the target market. Additionally, the positive effects of higher sales are closely related to the solid relationship that exists between the digital endorser and the audience that consumes social media content. Since social media and technology are constantly changing, it is essential to keep looking into the research theme in order to consider fresh approaches. Students use a variety of social media features to make decisions about whether or not to attend an Irish university.

Research design and method

Schwandt (2007) defines research analysis as the process of dividing a whole into parts and understanding how those parts work together. Qualitative analysis examines imprecise data that is difficult to obtain and analyze to obtain the desired outcome (Scott, 2021). Unlike quantitative analysis, which focuses on numerical data from surveys, qualitative analysis emphasizes non-quantifiable data and values. Qualitative analysis can be used to analyze any form of literature. Various sources of qualitative analysis can be found in research methods such as quantitative, qualitative, or mixed research. It involves examining textual data from interview transcripts and relies heavily on the researcher's interrogation skills, analytical ability, and understanding of the social context from which the data was collected (Lumen Learning, 2019).

Data Collection

The study collected primary data by conducting Google Form surveys and interviews through social media platforms. Approximately 60 participants were asked about their experiences, and the questions for the interviews were formulated based on existing qualitative studies to ensure the capture of accurate perspectives and contemplations on education destination selection. Data collection involved considering eight resources of evidence, as well as adhering to Yin's four principles of data collection (Yin, 2014). Participants were alarmed that their participations were not in written and that they could withdraw at any time before the interview starts. The data collection process typically took around five minutes to complete, with Google Forms used as the primary tool.

Data Analysis Methods

The data analysis followed a chronological approach (Gioia, 2013) and strictly adhered to the guidelines of qualitative analysis, specifically thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method of analysing qualitative data where the researcher identifies common themes, patterns of meaning, ideas, and topics that are repeated in the textual data (Caulfield, 2019). This process involves six steps: the first step involves creating an overview of the collected data, while in the second step, the researcher highlights certain sections of the text. The selected codes are then transformed into themes in the third step. The fourth step involves reviewing the selected themes to ensure they serve the researcher's intentions, while the fifth step involves naming and defining each theme. Finally, the sixth step involves the write-up process, including an introduction that introduces the aims, approaches, and research questions (Mortensen, 2020).

Thematic analysis is a highly adaptable approach that produces a detailed, complex, and rich account of data and can be used for a wide range of studies, thanks to its academic freedom (Braun and Clarke, 2006; King, 2004).

Below are the results of the Survey Conducted to get a deep dive thorough analysis –

College
51 responses

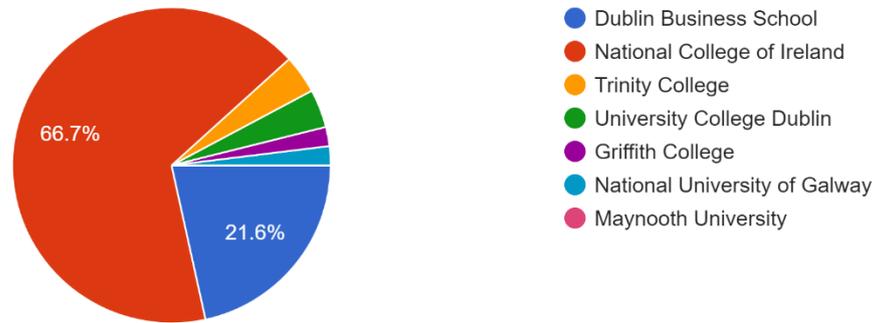


Fig 1.1

Do you use Social Media?
51 responses

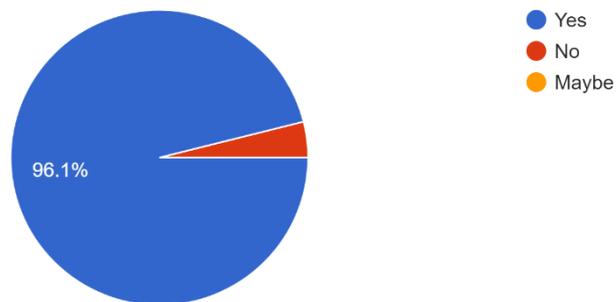


Fig 1.2

How often do you use Social Media?
51 responses

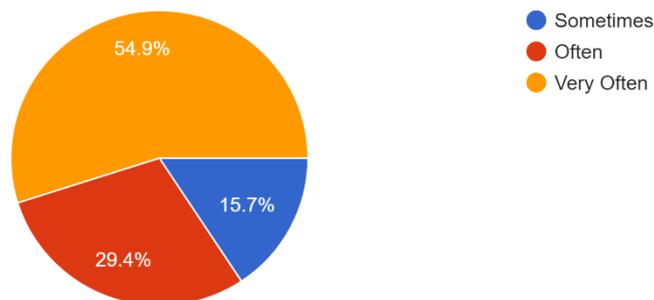


Fig 1.3

Rank them in order of your preference with respect to academic decision of studying abroad in Ireland.

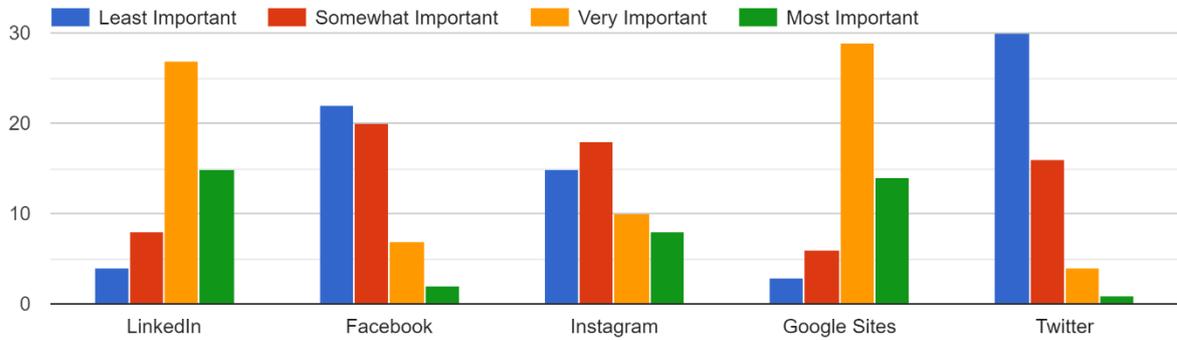


Fig 1.4

On a scale of 1-5, to what extent Social Media is Impacted?

51 responses

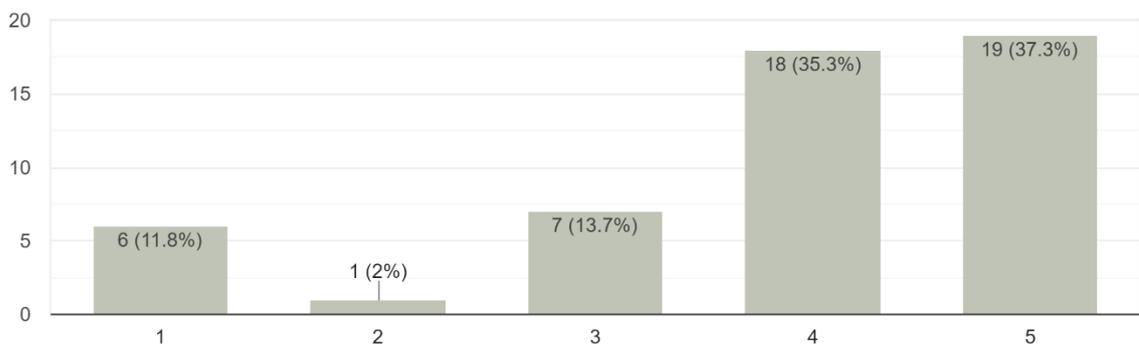


Fig 1.5

What influences you to do further Studies in Ireland?

51 responses

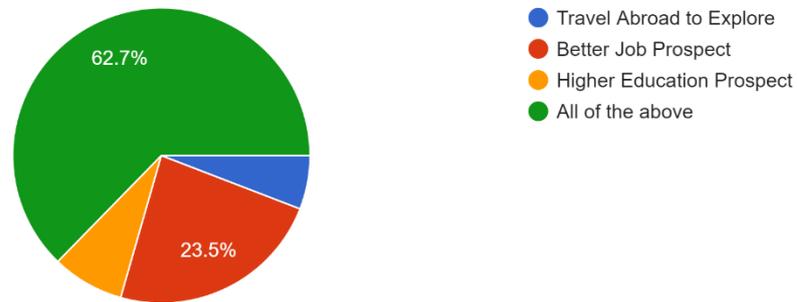


Fig 1.6

List the number of Potential Factors that you felt were relevant to study in Ireland.

51 responses

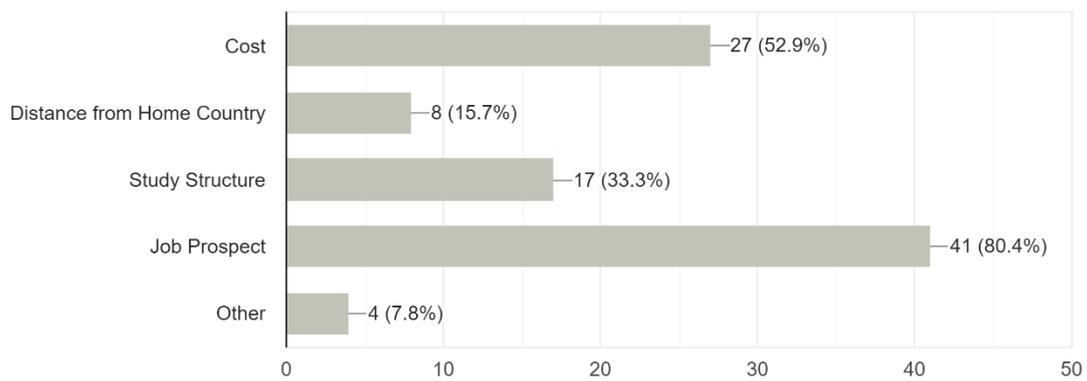


Fig 1.7

Given these factors, how good is Social Media in assessing those?

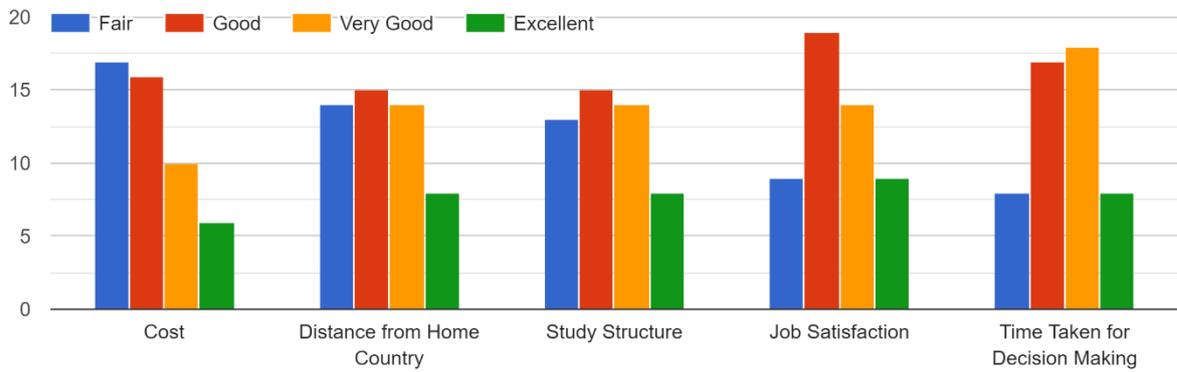


Fig 1.8

Any challenges you faced while making Ireland as your study abroad destination?

51 responses

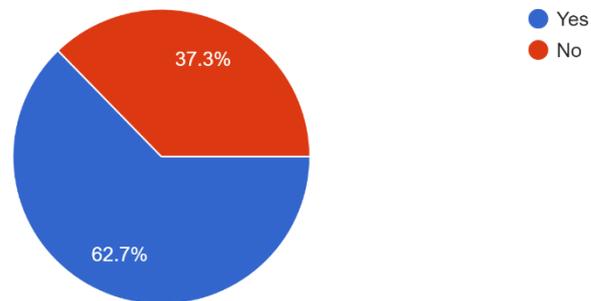


Fig 1.9

If your last answer is Yes, what was/were the main Challenges?

36 responses

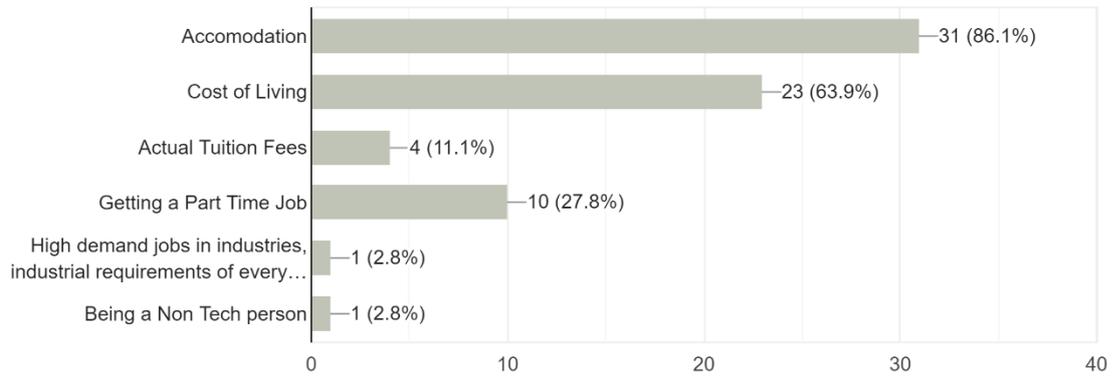


Fig 1.10

How effective was the Communication Factor between you and your college?

51 responses

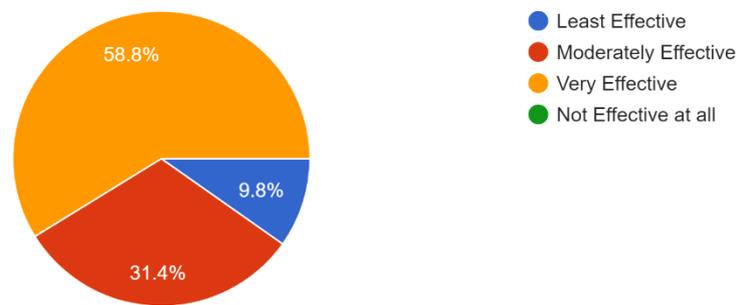


Fig 1.11

What were the effective modes of Communication?

51 responses

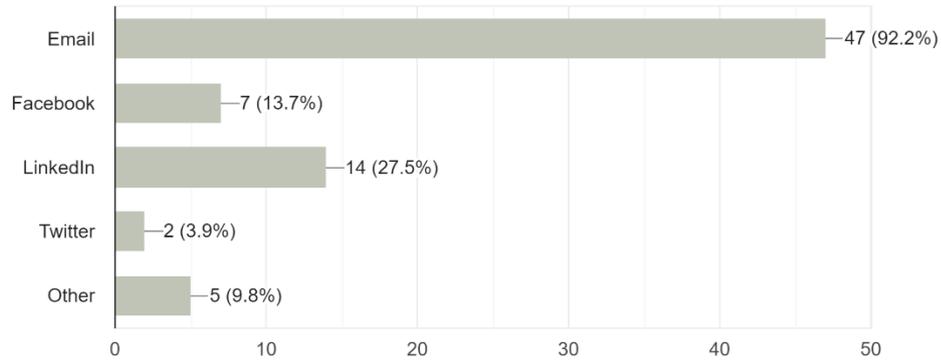


Fig 1.12

The questionnaires were designed to obtain insights into how social media played a role in students' selection of universities. The participants were asked to provide their opinions and experiences regarding social media platforms, specific features, and websites related to education in Ireland. The researcher ensured that the Interview was structured and comprehensive to provide meaningful and insightful data.

To investigate the impact of social media on students' university choices, the researcher conducted an Interview face to face and virtual consisting of four questions. The questions included:

- What specific social media features did you find most helpful when selecting a third-level degree programme in Ireland?
- Which social media platforms do you believe were most effective in promoting third-level degree programmes in Ireland?
- What aspects of Education in Ireland's website and social media platforms do you think have the greatest influence on your decision-making when choosing a third-level degree programme in Ireland?

- In what ways do you think your engagement with alumni and current students through social media influenced your decision-making process when selecting a third-level degree programme in Ireland?

Interviews Conducted

The study involved 10 participants who were either graduates or currently enrolled as third level students in Ireland. During data analysis, two demographic factors were taken into account, namely, age group and gender.

Age	Participants
21	1
24	1
25	2
26	2
28	1
29	2
30	1

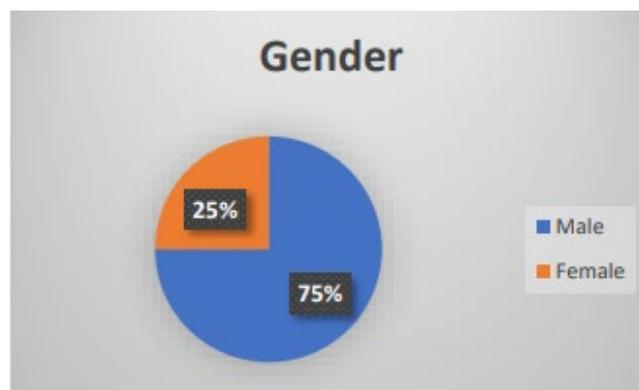


Fig 1.13

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

- The characteristics of social media that prove to be the most advantageous in choosing a master level degree program in Ireland: The researcher claims that some social media features are especially helpful in assisting students in Ireland in selecting a third level degree program. During interviews, few respondents stated that the most important social media features that influenced their choice of Ireland as a location for higher education were ratings, reviews, and pictures. Others, on the other hand, claimed that the most important characteristic of social media platforms that could help in choosing Ireland as a destination for higher education was the ability to connect with prospective and current students and obtain information about courses and job opportunities through WhatsApp and Facebook groups. Some students also emphasized the importance of social media platforms' open responses and comments from others as factors in choosing Ireland as a location for higher education. According to Sobaih et al. (2016), social media is crucial for academic-related tasks, such as deciding where to attend college. Since they spend the majority of their time on social media sites like Facebook and Instagram, students are increasingly using these websites as their main sources of information. Students are more likely to use social media to assess images, reviews, and comments when deciding where to attend college. Social media also enables students to learn more about the specifics of their courses and the employment possibilities after completing their higher education.

In summary, social media is becoming increasingly important in helping students select a third level degree program in Ireland. The availability of pictures, reviews, and comments, as well as the ability to connect with alumni and other students, are crucial features of social media that aid in decision-making. Moreover, social media helps students obtain information about course details and job opportunities, making it an indispensable tool for selecting a destination for higher education. However, students should also be mindful of the potential for misleading information and biases on social media platforms and ensure that they use reliable sources to make informed decisions.

- The social media platforms that are most efficient in promoting third level degree programs in Ireland: The decision-making process for selecting a higher education destination has been greatly impacted by the use of social media. McCabe (2017)

highlighted the significant role of LinkedIn in this aspect. Social media has transformed how individuals present themselves professionally, with LinkedIn being the primary focus of this white paper. The author discusses career-related social media marketing tactics and claims that social media has developed into a crucial tool for job searching and career advancement. With social networking sites and analytics connecting them to career opportunities, job seekers are more advanced in their methods for finding potential employers. The author responds to how this development has affected conventional hiring procedures. The study found that some people believe Facebook and the internet to be the most powerful social media platforms for influencing their decision on selecting Ireland as their destination for further education. This information is relevant to the promotion of third-level degree programs in Ireland. According to Manasijević et al. (2016), Facebook is the most commonly used social media platform by students to select their higher education destination. The study found that students use Facebook for various purposes, such as social relations, work activities, and daily activities. With Facebook, they can connect with other students from international universities and become familiar with the course structures of those universities. Additionally, Facebook enables students to collaborate with their peers and share materials that help them complete their higher education. Boivin (2021) also emphasized the effectiveness of LinkedIn as a social media tool for students deciding on their higher education. LinkedIn targets prospective students, both graduate and undergraduate, with most of its users being between 18-34 years of age. These users rely on LinkedIn to search for various places when choosing their destination for higher education. Social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram have become essential tools for students in their decision-making process when selecting their higher education destination. These platforms provide students with the opportunity to gain knowledge about prospective universities and courses. They also offer opportunities for students to connect with other students and share information that can help them complete their higher education.

- The characteristics of education presented on websites and social media platforms in Ireland have a significant impact on the decision-making process of students when selecting a third-level degree program in Ireland: According to the researcher, the comprehensive nature of education and career-related posts are some of the most

significant factors that influence students to choose Ireland as their destination for pursuing a third level degree program. Students learn from Ireland's websites and social media platforms about the duration of courses (three years) and the job opportunities they can expect after completing their higher education. In addition, respondents reported that they discovered information about the social environment and quality of education in Ireland from these sources. Career-related posts on Irish blogs and social media platforms are an excellent way to attract students to pursue their third level degree in Ireland. The respondents noted that Ireland has a higher percentage of placement than other countries, which provides students with significant job placement opportunities. Patni (2020) mentioned that the education system of Ireland ranks among the top twenty in Europe according to the IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook. The country's economy is one of the fastest-growing in the world, with numerous multinational companies operating there, providing students with excellent job prospects after completing their higher education. Students also learn that Ireland has a diverse education system that has earned a global reputation for high educational standards. Zhao (2021) suggests that another reason students prefer Ireland as a destination for higher education is the country's new culture, and friendly people. Ireland is also known for being a family-friendly society that welcomes international students. Festivals, traditions, customs, and folk music are integral aspects of Irish culture, making it a unique and attractive destination for students.

- The decision-making process of respondents to choose Ireland as their destination for completing their third-level degree program is influenced by their interactions with alumni and current students on social media platforms: The researcher has noted that some respondents find it highly advantageous to communicate with other Indian students who have studied at Irish universities and have had positive experiences. Such interactions play a significant role in their decision-making process, as genuine responses are crucial in influencing their choices. However, some respondents do not find it beneficial to speak to alumni or current Indian students at Ireland University, as they do not provide much information regarding the advantages and disadvantages of studying in Ireland. Others find that although they have gained valuable insights through these conversations, it is not the only factor that influences their decision to pursue higher education in Ireland, as they also consider other factors such as

financial considerations and the environment. Mercille and Murphy (2017) have suggested that interacting with current and alumni students can provide students with insights into the neo-liberalization of Irish Higher Education under Austerity, which is a valuable factor for many students to consider.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

While the sample of students surveyed in this study was broad, particularly in the case of the questionnaire which was answered by 51 respondents, perhaps a broader set of interviewees would have been helpful.

Additionally, the basis of the interviewee selection whereby only students who had chosen Ireland as an international study location, may have introduced some selection bias. A similar study involving final year students based in India who were considering their options for overseas studies might be interesting.

Finally, the survey portion study was carried out at a single point in time. It may be interesting to re-survey the respondents at a later date to examine whether their thoughts have changed over time.

DISCUSSION

The objective of this research is to examine how social media is being utilized as a digital marketing tool to influence international students in their decision to select Ireland as their preferred destination for higher education. The interview findings indicate that several social media platforms, including Myspace, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Google+, YouTube, Instagram, and others, have a significant number of followers and student profiles. The literature review also reveals that these social media platforms are being used to identify university course requirements through online channels or to gather preliminary information before visiting the institution in person.

To summarize, this study investigates the result of social media on international students' decision-making regarding education in Ireland. The results of the study suggest that social media platforms are playing a crucial role in students' decision-making processes. A variety of social media platforms, such as Myspace, Twitter etc. are being used by students to obtain information about universities and their course offerings before making a final decision. Overall, the study highlights the importance of social media as a digital marketing tool for obtaining abroad education, as it can influence students' decision-making processes and ultimately attract more international students to study in Ireland. Additionally, the study emphasizes the need for universities to establish a strong online platform and presence to engage with students through different social media platforms to remain competitive.

The researcher noted from the data analysis that the influence of social media platforms in the decision-making process of students choosing Ireland for higher education is not solely dependent on the platforms themselves but also on their features. However, there is no evidence to suggest that one student's influence is greater than another. Social media features such as pictures and detailed course information of international universities play a crucial role in helping students make informed decisions. Reviews and comments from other students also aid in the decision-making process. The study highlights job opportunities, honesty, and authenticity as critical features of social media that influence students' decisions to choose Ireland for higher education. Other features also contribute to students' decision-making processes, but the study emphasizes the importance of social media in providing accurate and honest information to students. Overall, the study highlights the significance of social media in aiding students in making informed decisions and choosing Ireland as their destination for higher education.

The aim of this study is to identify which social media tool effectively influences students to choose Ireland as their destination for higher education. The researcher observed that some students consider Facebook and Instagram as the most effective social media tools, while others consider the Internet and WhatsApp more effective in selecting their destination for higher education. Data analysis indicates that students tend to utilize multiple social media tools as they are all compelling enough to help them make decisions (Chugh and Ruhi, 2018). Students' responses revealed that they used digital platforms of social media for various reasons, such as quality institutions, innovation, research, and more. According to Chichioco

(2020), many students choose Ireland as their destination for higher studies because it offers excellent study facilities, and a majority of the students are international students.

The study suggests that there is no one specific social media tool that is more effective than others in influencing students' decisions. Instead, students use a variety of tools to make informed decisions about their higher education destination. The reasons for choosing Ireland as a study destination vary, but the quality of institutions and research opportunities are prominent factors. The study emphasizes the importance of utilizing multiple social media tools and conducting thorough research before deciding on a destination for higher education. The National Framework of Qualifications is utilized by the Irish government to ensure that the quality of education is consistent across all universities in the country, allowing for research opportunities in various fields including humanities, healthcare, social sciences and natural sciences (Zhang, Larkin and Lucey, 2017). This provides graduates and undergraduates with ample opportunities to apply for research programs that are focused on innovation and creativity. The Irish Curriculum is known to emphasize problem-solving skills, inventive thinking and creativity (Zhang, Larkin and Lucey, 2017).

In summary, the Irish government strives to maintain the quality of education through the National Framework of Qualifications, which ensures that research opportunities are provided in various fields. The Irish Curriculum emphasizes the development of problem-solving skills, inventive thinking and creativity, providing students with an innovative education that prepares them for their future careers (Zhang, Larkin and Lucey, 2017). The Internet and Facebook were found to be the most effective social media platforms for students in choosing Ireland as a destination for higher education, according to Chugh and Ruhi (2018). The students believe that there are many opportunities available for both undergraduate and graduate students, with many of the top organizations having research facilities in the country. Additionally, multinational companies present in Ireland provide job opportunities for students after they complete their higher education.

The decision-making process of Indian students for selecting a third-level degree program in Ireland is influenced by the length of the course and job opportunities, which they become aware of through Ireland's websites and social media platforms. The country is actively investing in higher education to provide opportunities for international students, and Indian students can obtain globally recognized academic recognition from Irish universities, which

can help them in securing job opportunities worldwide (Peruta and Shields, 2017). Irish universities offer comprehensive education, and students can work while studying. The welcoming and friendly approach of Irish culture is also a significant attraction for Indian students, who can experience it first hand at the beginning of their education (Chugh and Ruhi, 2018).

Through the blogs and social media sites of Irish universities, Indian students also become aware that many current students are managing their studies while performing part-time work (Chichioco, 2020). Ireland is striving to establish more world-class universities, with research facilities and opportunities provided by multinational companies, which can be attractive to students seeking to pursue research-driven programs (Zhang, Larkin, and Lucey, 2017). In summary, Irish universities offer a comprehensive education system, excellent job opportunities, a friendly culture, and the chance to work while studying, making it a preferred destination for Indian students seeking to pursue higher education abroad.

According to the study, Ireland, a small island country in Western Europe, has a deep-rooted culture of creativity and problem solving that attracts many students to pursue their higher education there (Mnkandla and Minnaar, 2017). Despite facing competition from larger and more developed emerging economies, Ireland has adopted a more advanced approach by creating unique niches and disciplines, making it an entrepreneurial nation that looks for new solutions to previously considered ineligible problems (Forbush and Foucault-Welles, 2016). Irish universities have produced many sought-after graduates each year who possess skills to deal with current and future challenges in various industries and markets worldwide (Mnkandla and Minnaar, 2017).

The people of Ireland are well-known for their creativity, as evidenced by their leading roles in the world's most comprehensive technology and pharmaceutical companies, international banks, and renowned agricultural products. Despite its small size, Ireland has made an impact on the world beyond its proportional size due to its deep-rooted culture of creativity and problem-solving (Peruta and Shields, 2017).

Irish universities' blogs and social media sites highlight the success stories of graduates in various fields such as business, economics, science, entertainment, and arts. The Irish culture values success on the world stage, with a focus on the future rather than the present, making it a destination for Indian students seeking higher education (Manca and Ranieri, 2016).

In conclusion, Ireland's culture of creativity, problem-solving, and entrepreneurship, as well as its success stories and future-focused approach, attract many students, especially from India, to pursue their higher education there.

According to research, Ireland has been successful in transforming itself into a global financial service sector in a short period of time, attracting many multinational companies to the country. The country's focus on embracing opportunities and prospects has made it an attractive destination for international students, including those from India (Forbush and Foucault-Welles, 2016).

Social media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp have proven to be valuable tools for Indian students to learn about career opportunities in Ireland. Many multinational businesses such as Microsoft, eBay, and Skype have a presence in Ireland, providing great career opportunities for international students. The University College Dublin (UCD) also offers internship opportunities to international students, allowing them to gain real-world experience that can be invaluable when searching for jobs in other countries (Stephens and McLaughlin, 2020).

The recognition of Irish universities is widely accepted globally, making them an attractive option for international students. Social media platforms such as blogs and social media sites of Irish universities allow Indian students to connect with current students, learn about courses, and the benefits of studying in these universities. These platforms are becoming increasingly important for students in their decision-making process and have a significant influence on their choices (Manca and Ranieri, 2016).

Social media engagement and influence on student decision-making are often underestimated. It is observed that many international students rely on social media to view online content and decide which college or university is best for them (Singhal, 2020). Irish universities are leveraging social media platforms to attract students from other countries by continuously posting pictures and updates.

In conclusion, Ireland's transformation into a global financial service sector, along with the presence of multinational companies and excellent universities, has made it an attractive

destination for international students. Social media platforms have played a significant role in allowing Indian students to learn about these opportunities, connect with current students, and make informed decisions about their education.

Irish universities are utilizing influential marketing theories and modern techniques to attract international students, including Indian students, by constantly updating their blogs and social media sites with information regarding the facilities they provide for higher education and job opportunities after graduation. Instead of relying on traditional methods of attracting students, Irish universities are experimenting with social media marketing strategies such as blogging, virtual tours, webinars, and Cappex. The fast-paced environment and the advancement of modern technology have made students more likely to rely on social media and other online sites for decision making when selecting universities for higher education. The importance of cross-border education has increased among Indian students, with many leaving their home country to pursue higher education in countries like Ireland, which is a hub for many multinational companies.

Singhal (2020) highlights the importance of social media and other online platforms in the decision-making process of students when selecting universities for higher education. The study also observes the trend of Indian students leaving their home country to pursue higher education in other countries, including Ireland, due to the vast opportunities offered by multinational companies in Ireland.

CONCLUSION

The use of social media platforms has become increasingly important in influencing the decision-making process of Indian students when choosing Ireland as a destination to complete their higher studies and gain better job opportunities.

Coming to the point of interviews and surveys conducted, this can be observed that – Around 96% of students use Social Media, that too very often. When asked to rank them in order of your preference with respect to the academic decision of studying abroad in Ireland; Google Sites was quoted to be the most effective media to gather information and get knowledge about studying abroad, followed by LinkedIn and Facebook. This gives a definite proof that different google sites carries different information, that makes every student to take decision more easily; Also, one of the question asked was, to what extent social media is

impacted? The answer came was really surprising, as it was around 90%. Every student gets influenced by one or other parameter, when it comes to the decision of studying outside to a different country. Keeping this in mind, the next question that was asked is – What influences you to do further studies in Ireland? There were four options; travel abroad to explore, better job prospect, higher education prospect and all of the above. Around 63% of student choose all of the above. From this, we can say that, coming out from home country and studying abroad is not an easy decision to make out, students have researched and found that Ireland is the best place to study as an International student. There were numerous factors given that one feels relevant to study abroad in Ireland, including Cost, Accommodation, Study Structure etc. We received a positive response on all, as they considered social media to be very essential on figuring out the factors. The colleges in Ireland plays a crucial role when it's on Communication. This is proven, as around 65% of students says it was very effective, as the interaction between the students and the colleges was very strong, the present study suggests that social media and various online platforms of digital media provide universities and students with numerous benefits in terms of their decision-making process to choose a foreign university for higher education. Social media networks facilitate students' learning and engagement in higher education, which is beneficial for them. Many students and their parents are already using social media and are very proficient in using the platform. Therefore, they rely heavily on the online platform of various social media sites to obtain information and choose the right university for their higher education. In this regard, universities in Ireland post their course details, fees, environment of the classroom, and other helpful information on their blogs and other social media sites. For example, teachers can create a Facebook group dedicated to homework and posting important announcements. Besides, students can use Pinterest to view their artwork and projects, which can help them make an informed decision. Given that Ireland has become a hub for many multinational companies, Indian students are more inclined to choose Ireland for their higher education. Overall, social media platforms play a significant role in the decision-making process of Indian students, who consider various factors, such as course details, fees, job opportunities, and university environment, before making an informed decision.

The aim of the study was to examine how Indian students use social media platforms and other online resources to choose a university and country to pursue their higher studies. The study found that social media and social networking sites have become increasingly important to students. Today's generation is considered "digitally native," and they are more

likely to gather information through the internet and social media. This makes them the "social networking generation."

The universities in Ireland have also realized the importance of social media and have started posting their course details and job opportunities on their blogs. This has benefited students who are interested in pursuing their higher education in Ireland. The study's second objective was to determine whether social media played a critical role in selecting the desired course for higher studies. The research findings indicate that social media has been helpful in providing students with the necessary course details.

Through social media platforms, Indian students can communicate with other foreign students, particularly those attending universities in Ireland, to learn about the scope of their studies, job opportunities after graduation, and research and innovation prospects. Indian students interact with current and alumni students of Irish universities to gain insights into the course structure and curriculum. Overall, the study concludes that social platform plays a major role in the decision-making process of Indian students who are considering studying abroad. The availability of course details, job opportunities, and interaction with current and alumni students helps them make informed decisions. As a result, universities in Ireland are using social media marketing strategies to attract more international students. By providing course details, job opportunities, and other essential information on their social media platforms, Irish universities can effectively communicate with prospective students and enhance their reputation. The objective of this study was to examine the use of social media by Indian students for selecting foreign universities and colleges for higher studies. The study found that social media has become an essential part of the lives of Indian students, providing them with access to information and connections to learning groups and other educational systems. The use of social media has also become a critical factor in the decision-making process of Indian students when choosing foreign universities. Indian students use various social media platforms, these platforms have become integral to students' lives, making it easy and convenient for them to exchange information, communicate with each other, and keep in touch. Social media networks have allowed institutions and students to improve their teaching and learning processes. It has also allowed students to develop valuable connections in their careers. With Ireland becoming a hub for many multinational companies, Indian students are more inclined to choose Ireland for their higher education.

The fifth objective of the study was to assess the effectiveness and helpfulness of Irish universities' social media platforms in the selection process. The study found that the blogs and social media sites of Irish universities were successful in attracting Indian students. The universities regularly posted about their courses, job opportunities, and scope for research and innovation, which made them appealing to Indian international students.

The last objective of the study was to compare the traditional selection process with social media marketing and identify which was more helpful for universities. It was observed that social media marketing was more effective in attracting students to Irish universities. By promoting their social media platforms, Irish universities were able to attract several Indian students to pursue their higher education in their institutions.

The main aim of the study was to examine the importance of social media tools in influencing the decision-making process of Indian international students to choose Ireland as a destination for higher studies. The researcher concluded that various social media platforms and networking sites had a significant impact on Indian international students' decision to pursue higher studies in Ireland. Although the influence of social media platforms was not overwhelming, the accessibility of information on Irish universities' social media sites and the presence of Indian students on these platforms made a difference. Overall, social media platforms had an impact on the traditional sources of information used in the selection of university courses and decision-making procedures.

FUTURE RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

The research findings provide valuable insights on how universities can utilize social media to approach students and how this approach can affect their decision-making process. This also suggests the potential for further research on Indian students in this area.

- The study was limited in terms of participant selection due to time and resource constraints, and thus, a larger sampling research among Indian students across Ireland is recommended. The research can also include a wider range of age groups and genders, as finding suitable participants was a challenge. The insights gained from such research can provide untapped perspectives for universities and colleges, which can aid in their educational efforts.

- The present study utilized qualitative thematic analysis as its research method. However, there is a possibility for future researchers to employ quantitative research methods. In order to collect data within the quantitative paradigm, methods like surveys, structured observation, as well as experiments are preferred (Heath and Tynan, 2010). Quantitative research points out the use of measurement in the collection and analysis of data.
- In conclusion, it is recommended that further research should be conducted on the impact of targeted advertisements on students' decision-making power using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. This is particularly relevant given the increasing use of artificial intelligence and the growing influence of targeted ads in today's society, where social media platforms play a crucial role.

REFERENCES

1. Abrar, M. et al. (2019) 'Predicting online customer engagement: A case Study of Saeed Ajmal Stores', *Journal of Managerial Sciences*, 13(2), pp.47-58. Available at: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=bsu&AN=139688832&site=eds-live&scope=site>
2. Ammigan, R. and Laws, K. N. (2018) 'Communications Preferences Among International Students: Strategies for Creating Optimal Engagement in Programs and Services', *Journal of International Students*, 3, pp.1293. doi: 10.5281/zenodo.1254584.
3. Azmat, F. et al. (2013) 'Understanding Aspirations and Expectations of International Students in Australian Higher Education', *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 33(1), pp.97-111. Available at: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=eric&AN=EJ995473&site=eds-live&scope=site>
4. Biraghi, S. (2017) 'Internationally mobile students and their brands: Insights from diaries', *International Journal of Market Research*, 59(4), pp.449. Available at:

[http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=e
db&AN=124425106&site=eds-live&scope=site](http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=e
db&AN=124425106&site=eds-live&scope=site)

5. Bowers, T.A. and Pugh, R.C., 1972. A comparison of factors underlying college choice by students and parents. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED062936.pdf>.
6. Chichioco, A., 2020. How to Develop a Social Media Strategy for Educational Institutions - AdvertiseMint. [online] AdvertiseMint. Available at: <https://www.advertisemint.com/how-to-develop-a-social-media-strategy-for-educational-institutions/>.
7. Chugh, R. and Ruhi, U., 2018. Social media in higher education: A literature review of Facebook. *Education and Information Technologies*, 23(2), pp.605-616.
8. Clark, M., Fine, M. B., & Scheuer, C.-L. (2017). Relationship quality in higher education marketing: The role of social media engagement. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 27(1), 40–58. doi:10. 1080/08841241.2016.1269036
9. Bălțeanu, C., 2019. The Role and Importance of Social Media in the Direct Selling Sector. *Analele Universității Constantin Brâncuși din Târgu Jiu: Seria Economie*, (6), pp.28-33. Available at: [http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=e
dsdoj&AN=edsdoj.69921bb2658442d48014b06b02165ba9&site=eds-
live&scope=site](http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=e
dsdoj&AN=edsdoj.69921bb2658442d48014b06b02165ba9&site=eds-
live&scope=site)India Blooms [HT Digital] (2019)
10. Gehman, J., Treviño, L. K., & Garud, R. (2018). Finding Theory-Method Fit: A Comparison of Three Qualitative Approaches to Theory Building. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 27(3), 284–300. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1056492617706029>
11. Heath, M., & Tynan, C. (2010). Crafting a research proposal. *The Marketing Review*, 10(2), 147-168.

12. Hsueh, C.-M. (2018). Recruiting International Students with Technology: The Changing and The Unchanged. *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, 20(2), 40–42.
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=eric&AN=EJ1205746&site=eds-live&scope=site>
13. Hubinová, J. (2015). Self-Promotion of Individuals via Social Media- a Useful Tool to Sell Oneself as a Product Trademark. *Marketing Identity*, (part 2), 378–384.
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=bsu&AN=119226618&site=eds-live&scope=site>
14. Hyett, N., Kenny, A., Dickson-Swift, V., & Garvey, G. (2019). Trialing Virtual Intercultural Learning With Australian and Hong Kong Allied Health Students to Improve Cultural Competency. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 23(3), 389–406. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315318786442>
15. Dave Evans. (2008). *Social Media Marketing : An Hour a Day*. Indianapolis, Ind: Sybex (Serious Skills). Available at:
<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=nlbk&AN=248416&site=eds-live&scope=site>.
16. Eaton, P. W. and Pasquini, L. A. (2020). ‘Networked practices in higher education: A netnography of the #AcAdv chat community’, *The Internet and Higher Education*, 45. doi: 10.1016/j.iheduc.2019.100723.
17. Forbush, E. and Foucault-Welles, B. (2016). Social media use and adaptation among Chinese students beginning to study in the United States. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 50, pp.1-12.
18. Gbollie, C. and Gong, S. (2020). ‘Emerging Destination Mobility: Exploring African and Asian International Students’ Push-Pull Factors and Motivations to Study in China’, *International Journal of Educational Management*, 34(1), pp. 18–34.
Available at:
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=er>

ic&AN=EJ1239481&site=eds-live&scope=site.

19. Gehman, J. et al. (2018). 'Finding Theory-Method Fit: A Comparison of Three Qualitative Approaches to Theory Building', *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 27(3), pp. 284–300. doi: 10.1177/1056492617706029.
20. Manasijević, D., Živković, D., Arsić, S. and Milošević, I. (2016) 'Exploring students' purposes of usage and educational usage of Facebook', *Computers in Human Behavior*, 60, pp. 441-450.
21. Manca, S. and Ranieri, M. (2016) 'Facebook and the others. Potentials and obstacles of social media for teaching in higher education', *Computers & Education*, 95, pp. 216-230.
22. Marbach, J., Lages, C. R. and Nunan, D. (2016) 'Who are you and what do you value? Investigating the role of personality traits and customer-perceived value in online customer engagement', *Journal of Marketing Management*, 32(5-6), pp. 502-525. doi: 10.1080/0267257X.2015.1128472.
23. McCabe, M. B. (2017) 'Social media marketing strategies for career advancement: An analysis of LinkedIn', *Journal of Business and Behavioral Sciences*, 29(1), p. 85.
24. Mercille, J. and Murphy, E. (2017) 'The neoliberalization of Irish higher education under austerity', *Critical Sociology*, 43(3), pp. 371-387.
25. Mnkandla, E. and Minnaar, A. (2017) 'The use of social media in e-learning: A metasynthesis', *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning: IRRODL*, 18(5), pp. 227-248.
26. Naidoo, V. and Wu, T. (2011) 'Marketing strategy implementation in higher education: A mixed approach for model development and testing', *Journal of Marketing Management*, 27(11-12), pp. 1117-1141. doi: 10.1080/0267257X.2011.609132.

27. Singhal, A. (2020). Social Media and College Decision Making: A Study of High School Seniors. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 42(2), 143-153.
28. Stephens, L., & McLaughlin, J. (2020). International internships: Enhancing the student experience and preparing for career success. *Journal of International Education in Business*, 13(1), 26-45.
29. Peruta, E. and Shields, R. (2017). Rethinking the role of universities in the 21st century. *Journal of Higher Education Management*, 32(2), pp.1-11.
30. O'Reilly, A., Hickey, T. and Ryan, D. (2013) 'Higher Education Professionals' Perspectives on International Student Experiences of Life and Learning in Ireland: A Qualitative Study', *Irish Educational Studies*, 32(3), pp.355–375. Available at: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=eric&AN=EJ1021497&site=eds-live&scope=site>
31. O'Brien, C. (2020) 'Universities Facing Huge Losses Due To Fall In Foreign Students', *The Irish Times*. Available at: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/universities-facing-huge-losses-due-tofall-in-foreign-students-1.4231675>
32. OECD (2020), International student mobility (indicator). doi: 10.1787/4bcf6fc3-en. Available at: <https://data.oecd.org/students/international-student-mobility.htm>
33. Olcay, E. et al. (2019) 'An Agent-Based Model of an Online Collaboration Community by using Fuzzy Logic', *IFAC PapersOnLine*, 52(13), pp. 665–670. doi: 10.1016/j.ifacol.2019.11.121.
34. Paranawithana, D. L. S. et al. (2020) 'A comprehensive review on the influence of social media marketing in harnessing international students to Australia', 2020 IEEE Asia-Pacific Conference on Computer Science and Data Engineering (CSDE), Computer Science and Data Engineering (CSDE), 2020 IEEE Asia-Pacific Conference on, pp. 1–7. doi: 10.1109/CSDE50874.2020.9411536.

35. Patni, D. (2020) 'Why study in Ireland - Admission in colleges in Ireland in 2020, Benefits', Study abroad. Available at: <https://admission.buddy4study.com/study-abroad/why-study-in-ireland>.
36. Pawar, S. K., Dasgupta, H. and Vispute, S. (2020) 'Analysis of factors influencing international student destination choice: a case of Indian HE', *Journal of Further & Higher Education*, 44(10), pp. 1388–1400. doi: 10.1080/0309877X.2019.1690640.
37. Peruta, A. and Shields, A.B. (2017) 'Social media in higher education: Understanding how colleges and universities use Facebook', *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 27(1), pp.131-143.
38. Pinar, M., Girard, T. and Basfirinci, C. (2020) 'Examining the relationship between brand equity dimensions and university brand equity: An empirical study in Turkey', *International Journal of Educational Management*, 34(7), pp. 1119-1139. Available at: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=e db&AN=143878891&site=eds-live&scope=site>
39. Saha, N., & Karpinski, A. (2016). The influence of social media on international students' global life satisfaction and academic performance. In K. Bista & C. Foster (Eds.), *Campus support services, programs, and policies for international students* (pp. 57-76). Hershey, PA: IGI Global.
40. Saw, G., Abbott, W., Donaghey, J. and McDonald, C. (2013) 'Social media for international students – it's not all about Facebook', *Library Management*, 34(3), pp. 156-174.
41. Sheth, J. N. (2020) 'Borderless Media: Rethinking International Marketing', *Journal of International Marketing*, 28(1), pp. 3–12. doi: 10.1177/1069031X19897044.
42. Shields, A. B. and Peruta, A. (2019) 'Social media and the university decision. Do prospective students really care?', *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 29(1), pp. 67–83. doi: 10.1080/08841241.2018.1557778.

43. Singhal, A. (2020). 11 Smart Higher Education Social Media Marketing Strategies. | Falcon.io. [online] Falcon.io. Available at: <https://www.falcon.io/insights-hub/topics/social-media-management/11-successful-higher-education-social-media-marketing-strategies/>
44. Sobaih, A.E.E., Moustafa, M.A., Ghandforoush, P. and Khan, M. (2016) 'To use or not to use? Social media in higher education in developing countries', *Computers in Human Behavior*, 58, pp. 296-305.
45. Starr-Glass, D. (2014) 'Internalizing cross-cultural sensitivity: reflective journals of migrant students', *Journal of International Education in Business*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 31-46.
46. Stephens, S. and McLaughlin, C. (2020) 'A Qualitative Study of Social Media Marketing in Ireland: The Facilitating Role of Higher Education', *Educational Process: International Journal*, 9(4), pp. 221-234.
47. Suvi Jokila (2019) 'International Student Recruitment Strategies in Finland and China', *Nordic Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 3(4). doi: 10.7577/njcie.3426.
48. Vrontis, D., Sakka, G. and Amirkhanpour, M. (2015) *Management Innovation and Entrepreneurship: A Global Perspective*. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. Available at: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=nlbk&AN=1077476&site=eds-live&scope=site>
49. We Are Social, Hootsuite, DataReportal. (2020). Most popular social networks worldwide as of July 2020, ranked by number of active users (in millions). Statista. Statista Inc.. Accessed: August 17, 2020. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/>

50. Xiong, L. et al. (2018) 'Rise of Social Media Marketing: A Perspective on Higher Education', 2018 13th International Conference on Computer Science & Education (ICCSE), Computer Science & Education (ICCSE), 2018 13th International Conference